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# Politicizing the Fear of Crime in Decentralized Indonesia: An Insight from Central Lombok

Yogi Setya Permana\*

In the study of contemporary local politics and the dynamics of decentralization in Indonesia, there is insufficient research on how political actors integrate both psychologically and emotionally as a strategy to gain power at the local level. This paper explores the way in which the emotion labelled “fear of crime” embodies local power, specifically in the Central Lombok District of West Nusa Tenggara Province. Efforts have been made to investigate how the fear of crime emerged and was disseminated, as well as how the politics of fear appeared and functioned in a social setting. This paper argues that fear can be socially constructed through talk of crime and politicized in the context of local elections by elites through informal security groups or individual *datu maling*, two entities that I refer to as “fear entrepreneurs.”

**Keywords:** fear, crime, informal security groups, local politics, violence, local election

## Introduction

This study investigates the link between politics and the fear of crime. The author analyzes how elites in Central Lombok use fear when seeking power, such as in local elections for the heads of districts. Along with the implementation of decentralization and regional autonomy as well as direct local elections of local government heads (*pemilihan kepala daerah* or *pilkada*) in Indonesia after 1998, the dynamics of local politics have been in the spotlight in academic debates about political transition and democratization.

Scholarship on fear of crime and politics suggests several salient points on how the former influences power competitions such as elections. However, there has been no research scrutinizing the link between the fear of crime and the outcome of local electoral politics in Indonesia. Most studies of local politics in post-New Order Indonesia have focused on contestation among political actors at the local level who used various strategies, resources, and networks, including religious sentiment (Buehler 2016), vote buying

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and money politics (Aspinall and Sukmajati 2016), mobilizing kinship structures (Savirani 2016), bureaucracy (Choi 2014), customary institutions (Van Klinken 2007), women's organizations (Dewi 2015), and violent vigilante groups (Wilson 2015; Bakker 2016).

However, research is lacking on how political actors use psychological and emotional strategies to gain power at the local level. The psychological factor referred to in this research is fear, especially the fear of crime. The fear of crime in post-Suharto Indonesian local politics has not been widely studied. This is surprising, as crime has been documented as being prevalent in Indonesian daily life. Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS 2016), the nationwide crime clock for 2015 reads 00.01"29'", which means that a crime occurs every 1 minute 29 seconds.

Central Lombok is an appropriate place to more deeply investigate the link between electoral politics and fear of crime. This is because Central Lombok has a high crime rate and an extensive informal security network, both of which are conducive for disseminating the fear of crime. The issue of crime and the existence of informal security groups in Lombok's political environment have been cited by scholars of the region. Although not explicitly discussing the link between the emotional aspect and electoral politics, prior studies provide significant insights into the existence of informal security groups in Lombok local politics. They explain how these groups intertwine with politicians to gain power in the region.

John McDougall (2007) conducted an in-depth observation of the intersection between underground crime networks and informal security groups such as AMPHIBI and Buru Jejak Kumpul. His empirical research has contributed to a contextual understanding of the emergence and political economy of violent groups in Lombok. His work also describes the economic networks in addition to historical and cultural insights into crime, particularly regarding theft in Lombok. J.J. Kingsley (2012) focuses on the link between religious leaders called Tuan Guru and informal security groups such as AMPHIBI and Hezbollah in local politics. Adam Tyson (2013) analyzes the effects of decentralization on the existence of a faith-based vigilante group named AMPHIBI. AMPHIBI has become significant in political contests where the organizational network can be used effectively as an instrument to mobilize political support. Kari Telle (2013; 2015) examines how informal security groups in Lombok obtain significant influence and recognition in social life so as to more easily access state resources.

Communities in Central Lombok District, where the primary livelihood derives from agriculture, encounter problems that threaten their assets, especially livestock. At the time of the political transition in 1998, the number of criminal cases in Lombok increased drastically—the number of cases registered in the Lombok court system doubled from 1997 to 1998 (Kristiansen 2003, 122). The social unrest during the political transition

impacted the tourism industry in Lombok, which saw a decline in the number of foreign visitors. The unemployment rate on the island was high, with only 17 percent of workers employed in the formal sector (*ibid.*). This contributed to increased crime on the island. The police, as the state agency with authority over security, were relatively ineffective in dealing with burglaries. The number of thefts in Lombok remains high to this day.

When the state failed to provide adequate security, informal security groups emerged to fill that role. It is no coincidence that Lombok is reputed to have the highest number of informal security groups of any region in the Indonesian archipelago. The largest number of groups is located in Central Lombok, where approximately 25 percent of adult men are active members of such groups (McDougall 2007; Telle 2015). Lombok communities prefer informal security groups to resolve their security problems. Some members of these groups are also famous for their magical abilities that can allegedly be used against thieves. In the eyes of local communities, these informal security groups legitimately capture and punish thieves, conducting this community-sanctioned violence outside of state frameworks.

In a situation where there is a collective fear of crime, political actors who provide solutions to security problems become very influential in the community. Once direct local elections were introduced, individuals elected as district heads became closely connected to informal security groups. This background suggests that investigating how the fear of crime is employed in the local political context remains essential to exploring the ways in which fear of crime shapes local power. To fulfill this main objective, this paper will discuss how fear of crime is constructed in society and how the politics of fear emerges and functions in social life, as well as the ways in which the consequences of this fear have changed recently. I argue that fear can be socially constructed through talk about crime and politicized in local elections by the elites through informal security groups and individual *datu maling*, two entities that I refer to as “fear entrepreneurs.”

## Theorizing the Linkages of Politics and Fear of Crime

Fear of crime can be applied as a source of legitimation for successful social and political control (Svendsen 2008, 111; Dammert 2012, 31). If crime can be converted to general political interests, it can become a crucial issue in elections. Response to crime is one of the most important criteria for evaluating a government’s performance (Dammert 2012, 31). Elites typically take advantage of public anxiety about crime to serve their political interests. In the West, politicians have often used the threat of crime to win support at election time. In the 1979 UK election Margaret Thatcher politicized the fear

of crime to achieve victory. She used the tagline “Feeling safe in the streets” as a campaign theme that successfully attracted British voters (Jackson *et al.* 2006, 8).

Fear of crime as a topic of scholarly discussion and public debate began to appear in the 1960s (Furedi 2006; Jackson *et al.* 2006). In the decades until the 1980s, governments made a significant effort to understand and control this kind of fear, especially in the United States and United Kingdom (Jackson *et al.* 2006, 3). As US President Johnson noted in the presidential report on crime in 1965, the US government needed to conduct studies and surveys to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. The observation was triggered by political and social contexts such as increasing social protests, racial discrimination, assassinations of political leaders, and the stigma about young, poor African Americans as perpetrators of crime (Dammert 2012, 29). A similar situation was observed in the UK, where inner city riots in the 1980s initiated massive media coverage of crime and its implications for British society (*ibid.*, 30).

In the constructivist sense, fear is socially constructed through language. Humans circulate fear socially through language, using language to internalize and express their feelings about fear, particularly in their interactions with each other. This means that the experience of fear is different for humans compared to animals. Specifically, it means that a sense of danger can be communicated over a great distance. A distant danger can be accepted as a direct threat to human well-being. As communication of this kind of threat depends on words, which may be misinterpreted, human beings can end up creating an imaginary threat (Svendsen 2008, 25). In turn, this imaginary threat can create a fear that shapes cultural norms within a specific community. Fear influences how people organize their everyday life so that they can anticipate potential threats. Routine action to anticipate threats transforms into a standardized practice of living. Moreover, repetition of stories about fear can influence general perspectives on life. It is even possible for specific fears to become a culture’s basic characteristic (*ibid.*, 19).

As fear is social and relational (Barker 2009, 267), it can be contagious (Svendsen 2008, 14)—that is, it can be transmitted socially. For instance, hearing the story of a criminal being discussed by other people can lead to feelings of fear (Barker 2009, 267). Fear is created from people’s testimony about threats. Moreover, people tend to exaggerate threat, with the consequence that rumors often portray danger as more acute than the actual situation warrants.

Like other forms of fear, fear of crime spreads in daily life through ordinary discourse, rhetoric, routines, and the mass media (Lupton and Tulloch 1999, 513). As suggested by Teresa Caldeira (2000, 19) in her research on “talk of crime” in Sao Paulo, Brazil, fear can arise from everyday conversations, commentaries, discussions, narratives, and jokes with crime as their subject. Thus, the general contagion effect of fear

applies strongly in the fear of crime.

In his classic work on fear during the 1789 French Revolution, Georges Lefebvre (1973) emphasizes the role of what he calls “relays” in spreading the fear of crime discourse across a wider area. As he writes, fear could reach almost all the regions of France only because of the help of these relays, which included doctors, dancing masters, merchants, priests, couriers, postmen, municipal officers, military commanders, and militia members. Traveling up to hundreds of kilometers, these people distributed stories of crime to the people they met on their journeys (Lefebvre 1973, 161).

The talk, rumors, and even myths about crime that circulate in certain communities do not exist only in relation to crime. They also reflect the broader political situation (Lupton and Tulloch 1999, 512). Discourse about fear of crime influences how people define whom and what they should fear (Barker 2009, 267). Based on Caldeira’s research in Sao Paulo, public discourse through narratives of crime creates stereotypes and prejudices about groups of people called *nortenos* as being perpetrators of crime. Similarly, public discourse engineered by the ideology apparatus during Suharto’s New Order Indonesia created a long-lasting stigma toward former members of the Indonesian Communist Party, which was crushed in the bloodshed of 1965 (Heryanto 2006). They came to be perceived as ghosts that needed to be feared but eliminated at the same time. Thus, there is a need to understand how power is involved in constructing discourse, and it is essential to understand the political interests involved in the fear of crime discourse.

### **The Social Construction of Fear in Central Lombok: Talk of Crime**

People in contemporary Central Lombok are concerned over the pervasiveness of theft. Not only livestock but also motorcycles are common targets of theft. Motorcycle theft occurs in all areas, including remote villages. In addition, people fear the sadistic behavior of thieves. The strong impression that the police are incapable of offering protection only serves to exacerbate people’s fears.

Based on statistics from the local police and the Statistics Office of Central Lombok District, theft cases consistently dominate Central Lombok’s list of crimes. Theft dominated the criminal case list for the entire Central Lombok region from 2004 to 2013. The highest percentage occurred in 2006, when theft accounted for 58 percent of the 52 types of criminal cases handled by police (BPS Lombok Tengah 2006, 274). In 2007, Central Lombok Police received 103 reports of motorcycle theft, of which only three cases were resolved as seen from Table 1. Table 1 shows that the high incidence of motorcycle theft continued until 2010, reaching 252 cases in that year. The police were

**Table 1** Criminality Rate in Lombok Tengah District 2006–10

Types of Criminality	Year				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Theft of cattle, goats, buffalo	85	118	38	52	151
Motorcycle theft	26	103	22	35	252
Violent theft	18	26	16	12	77

Source: BPS Lombok Tengah (2006; 2010).

able to resolve only 33 of these cases (BPS Lombok Tengah 2010, 233).

Limitations on the number of police personnel is often cited as a reason for their inability to overcome rampant motorcycle theft.<sup>1)</sup> Central Lombok Police officers numbered about 800 in 2013. They are responsible for security in a region with over 800,000 inhabitants (BPS Nusa Tenggara Barat 2014, 259). This ratio is well below the ideal ratio of 1:400 police to civilians specified by the United Nations.

However, the most crucial issue is people's reluctance to report crime to the police due to complicated, long, and costly bureaucratic processes. Many victims of crime are ordinary farmers who rarely deal with bureaucratic systems and are consequently wary of involvement with the police. An exception to this is the increasing practice of hiring mediators to help victims at police stations. These mediators mostly come from NGOs and are already accustomed to dealing with police under the banner of "people's advocacy." People assume that asking for help from NGO activists will facilitate their dealings with the police.<sup>2)</sup> NGO activists are believed to ensure that the investigation process will be shortened and not involve any additional cost. Many local people believe that asking an NGO activist for help is much cheaper and easier than going to a police station on their own.<sup>3)</sup> They only give the activist a small amount of money or offer goods as a sign of gratitude, but they experience no coercion from the activist.

The rampant criminal acts committed by young thieves in Central Lombok frighten all members of society. Younger thieves are reputed to be more sadistic in the way they conduct their operations. There have been several cases of theft and robbery accompanied by sadistic violence. On July 29, 2015 cattle thieves (allegedly 10 individuals) killed a man named Sumirat in Kateng village when he attempted to pursue them. Sumirat was stabbed several times and sustained injuries on different parts of his body, including his hands, waist, chest, and thighs (LombokPost.net 2015).

1) Interview with Lalu Sugiartha, Security and Intelligence Office–Central Lombok Police, May 29, 2013.

2) Interview with Ikhsan Ramdhani, local NGO activist, July 3, 2015.

3) Interview with Ikhsan Ramdhani, local NGO activist, July 3, 2015.

Instead of information about crime being spread through mainstream communication channels such as television or newspapers, the primary medium for spreading fear is a traditional construction called the *berugak*. *Berugak* are usually located in front of the house and are used instead of a living room. There is no concept of a separate space for a living room in the architecture of traditional Lombok houses. Therefore, the *berugak* functions as a place to receive guests and strangers. The use of *berugak* is influenced by the high incidence of robbery or theft in Lombok, a pattern that has historical precedent. By receiving guests in the *berugak*, a householder reduces the opportunity for outsiders to see valuable property inside the house.

The *berugak* is a place to exchange information, including stories about criminal cases. Locals discuss brutal murders in these spaces, and this information passes from *berugak* to *berugak* in different villages. By the time they are delivered, most stories are already filled with distortions. Each person adds to or modifies the story based on their own interpretation. In *berugak* conversations I was often encouraged to share stories of crime related to the villagers' experience. I discussed my concerns about the safety of personal belongings, especially after the theft that occurred in the house where I had been staying.

*Berugak* talk of crime not only spreads fear but also produces it. Everyone is free to speak about criminal cases with their own personal interpretation. Fact and fiction become mixed in *berugak* crime talk. People in *berugak* do not question the validity or accuracy of the crime stories they hear from others. On the contrary, everything is assumed to be true; people are more excited about discussing crime stories if they are more frightening than usual.

Recently, people in Central Lombok have been concerned with cases of violent criminal acts carried out during robberies. Thieves have not hesitated to hurt or even kill their victims. Residents in the village of Jago reported that they preferred to stay in their homes even if their neighbor was being robbed and screaming for help. They preferred to save themselves rather than helping to capture the thieves. An informant told me that a few nights after he had helped to capture a thief, his house was terrorized by the thief's associates. He could not bear this intimidation and decided to go to Malaysia as a migrant worker.<sup>4)</sup>

A criminal case that was much discussed in *berugak* and attracted a great deal of public attention in Lombok was the heartless murder of Sumirat, mentioned above. Sumirat was an ordinary farmer from Kateng village, in the subdistrict of southwestern Praya. His killing caused great anxiety among residents because they felt that this sort

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4) Interview with Jago village resident, confidential name, June 30, 2015.



of tragic incident could happen to anyone at any time.

People in *berugak* also discuss which areas are considered crime-prone or dangerous. These discussions can transform into intense debates. Everyone is free to agree or disagree with the opinions of others. Such talk can affect understandings of the level of security in a particular region. On one occasion in a *berugak*, I told people about my travels around the Central Lombok region, particularly the dam near Batujai village. Initially I thought it was safe as I did not experience any crime. However, people in the *berugak* warned me that the area was notorious for crime, especially motorcycle theft.

The stories discussed by people in *berugak* are passed on through families. Family members pass them on to neighbors, schoolmates, or friends in their prayer group. The stories spread quickly from house to house and village to village. In the end, *berugak* talk of crime can spread to the entire Central Lombok region. Distances between towns are small enough that residents meet each other easily.

With the high incidence of crime in Central Lombok, fear spreads quickly through discussions about crime, especially discussions held in *berugak*. Conversations about crime that are held in everyday life cause people to worry constantly. Although not everyone experiences crime directly or becomes a victim, the circulation of crime stories generates the emotion of fear. *Berugak* structures are a primary node for enabling the spread of fear, leading to a collective phenomenon. Fear in society has the potential to be exploited in local politics and provide benefits for certain political actors.

### **The Rise and Fall of Lalu Wiraatmaja a.k.a. Mamiq Ngoh, Kingpin of Central Lombok's Informal Security Groups**

When Lalu Wiraatmaja ran in the 2005 Central Lombok direct elections for local government head (*pemilihan kepala daerah* or *pilkada*), he understood very well the advantage of using informal security groups as part of his political machine. Better known by his nickname, Mamiq Ngoh, he was a pivotal figure in Central Lombok's informal security groups. He was widely reputed to have a close relationship with Buru Jejak Kumpul. Mamiq Ngoh is an aristocrat from the Praya House of Nobles. He inherited a standing as the leader of the local aristocracy, and his family are traditional leaders in Central Lombok. The founder and leader of Buru Jejak Kumpul, Amaq Raisah, has been loyal to the Praya aristocratic families. Amaq Raisah's family served as the trusted guards of Praya aristocrats in the past. Due to his influence, Mamiq Ngoh was appointed as the chairman of the Informal Security Groups Communication Forum when it was established in 2004. He became an adviser and protector of various informal security groups through-

out Central Lombok.

Buru Jejak Kumpul is the oldest informal security group in Central Lombok. It has branches, called units, in hundreds of villages around the region. A coordinator leads each of the units, which have varying numbers of members ranging from the dozens to the hundreds. Unit coordinators use amateur radio to communicate with members who are spread across villages, and to communicate with headquarters in Bilelando village. They use amateur radio as it is cheaper and more efficient than other types of communication, including mobile phones. Radio amateurs only need electric power and an antenna. Buru Jejak Kumpul became an organization prototype that was subsequently imitated by other emerging informal security groups, such as Elang Merah (Red Eagle) and Pakem Sasak.

Local people request these groups to provide security for their cattle. However, there is a price to be paid. For each head of cattle, people pay an annual fee of 250,000 rupiah to Buru Jejak Kumpul. Thus, if a person has five head of cattle he has to pay 1.25 million rupiah annually. A cow is worth around nine million rupiah. In accepting this payment, informal security groups accept responsibility for the assets' security. If cattle is stolen, the group is obliged to hunt down and recapture it. Protected clients are given a sticker with a Buru Jejak Kumpul logo to attach to the front of their houses. The group does not hesitate to use violence. Captured thieves are routinely taken to a location, usually the group's headquarters, to face a "trial" and punishment. Most forms of punishment involve physical violence, such as amputating parts of the body or even extrajudicial killings.

Mamiq Ngoh became the point of reference for informal security groups, obtaining an influential position among them. He was the person to whom these groups would address complaints if they faced problems. Almost every night Mamiq Ngoh's house was crowded with members of various informal security groups, who came with problems ranging from internal organizational issues to relationship difficulties among groups. Mamiq Ngoh did not hesitate to mediate between conflicting groups to make peace. He also frequently became a mediator for groups facing problems with local authorities and the police.<sup>5)</sup> This close relationship with informal security groups was the primary element in Mamiq Ngoh's strategy of contesting in local elections.

Mamiq Ngoh was elected as the head of Central Lombok District in the 2005 local elections. This was the first direct election of a local government head in decentralized Central Lombok. Many leaders of informal security groups joined Mamiq Ngoh's campaign team, some of them officially registered with the Regional Election Commission.

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5) Interview with Mamiq Ngoh, Central Lombok District head 2005–10, May 29, 2013.

Thousands of informal security group members demonstrated their explicit support for Mamiq Ngoh by escorting him when he registered as a candidate at the Regional Election Commission office (*Lombok Post* 2005). The informal security groups intimidated other candidates and their supporters with a series of public campaigns involving thousands of members. It was a public show of force in the streets of Central Lombok.

Informal security groups secured votes for Mamiq Ngoh at the grassroots level in ways other than the public show of force. It appears that Mamiq Ngoh used informal security groups to mobilize voters at the village level.<sup>6)</sup> He ensured that the population would vote for him through the network of informal security groups that spread into remote villages. His supporters did not hesitate to intimidate other candidates' supporters, disrupting their campaigns.

Mamiq Ngoh also used security as a central propaganda element in his campaign to attract votes in Central Lombok villages. He used the citizens' fear of criminal acts and theft as a way to attract support, creating the impression that he could ensure security in Central Lombok better than the other candidates could. Mamiq Ngoh himself cannot be separated from the image of a tough guy or *jago*. A member of his campaign team told me that Mamiq Ngoh had been a famous thug when he was young and fought with many people.<sup>7)</sup> This is why his supporters believed he was the only candidate who could deal with violent crime in the region.<sup>8)</sup> There was a strong belief that if the people wanted to be safe from crime, they should vote for Mamiq Ngoh.<sup>9)</sup>

By utilizing security as the central theme for campaign propaganda, Mamiq Ngoh aroused concerns among local people: they worried about their safety if they did not vote for him. They were intimidated by threats from members of informal security groups.<sup>10)</sup> If Mamiq Ngoh was defeated in a particular village's election, that village would receive no protection from thieves. Voters understood that no one would provide security for them if they did not follow the group's directions. Neither could any institution guarantee the safety of their cattle, apart from these informal security groups.

However, there were two factors that led to a dramatic decline in the number of votes for Mamiq Ngoh in 2010: the rivalry among informal security groups and public distrust over the issue of crime. Mamiq Ngoh's image of providing a solution to the security problem was in tatters. The political machine that he previously relied upon, informal security groups, began to be viewed negatively. People started questioning

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6) Interview with former secretary of Buru Jejak Kumpul, confidential name, June 4, 2013.

7) Interview with a former member of Mamiq Ngoh's campaign team, confidential name, July 3, 2015.

8) Interview with Bustomi Taefuri, a former NGO activist and politician, July 3, 2015.

9) Interview with a local journalist, confidential name, July 31, 2015.

10) Interview with a local journalist, confidential name, July 31, 2015.

their integrity when many thieves joined these groups and even sought their protection. Although the crime rate was still high, Mamiq Ngoh could no longer plausibly use it to attract votes.

Rivalry among informal security groups and public distrust over the issue of crime have led to a decline in the popularity of informal security groups over the last six years. Conflict among informal security groups is common as they each protect their members from thieves. Conflicts occur also when a thief belonging to a particular informal security group is caught by members of another group. The thief's friends then demand his release. They do not hesitate to attack each other to protect their friends if caught. If the captured thief has already been subjected to violence, his friends take revenge. The rivalry among informal security groups was triggered also by Mamiq Ngoh's favoritism toward Amaq Raisah when it came to resource distribution. According to several informants from informal security groups, Mamiq Ngoh paid attention to channeling resources (such as financial support) only to Amaq Raisah. He showed no concern for other groups even though they had also contributed to his 2005 success. This led to dissatisfaction among several informal security groups.

It can be seen that the social position of informal security groups has drifted a long way from their original rationale. The initial purpose of the groups was community-based self-protection, as police could not be relied upon to provide effective security against crime and theft. Gradually many thieves themselves became members of these groups.<sup>11)</sup> A thief whom I interviewed claimed he had joined various informal security groups.<sup>12)</sup> He joined them because he wanted protection from other groups. He was afraid of the violence and torture that was inflicted by members of informal security groups on captured thieves. He took care of his obligations to other group members, such as paying a certain amount of money at particular times. Local sources told me that thieves were initially allowed to join the groups so that they could be controlled; however, in the end this was impossible.<sup>13)</sup> The informal security groups ended up supporting the thieves.

After thieves began to join informal security groups, members of the public increasingly came to doubt the integrity of the groups. Initially the public supported the presence of informal security groups, as they believed they would provide protection despite their brutal behavior. However, public distrust developed as the groups began providing shelter for thieves, who continued their depredations. Theft and crime continued, but this

11) Interview with Lalu Syamsir, former state prosecutor and vice chairman of West Nusa Tenggara Province Legislative Council 2009–14, June 23, 2015.

12) Interview with a criminal perpetrator who had just been released from prison, confidential name, June 27, 2015.

13) Interview with Lalu Syamsir, former state prosecutor and vice chairman of West Nusa Tenggara Province Legislative Council 2009–14, June 23, 2015.

time they also involved informal security groups, either directly or indirectly.

Widespread public distrust of the informal security groups was not beneficial for Mamiq Ngoh's political career. Informal security groups were the backbone of his 2005 campaign: he won votes by portraying himself as a figure capable of restoring security to Central Lombok. As a patron of informal security groups in Central Lombok, he could not be separated from the presence of these groups. When doubts arose regarding the integrity of informal security groups, this also eroded trust in Mamiq Ngoh. This distrust reflected the fact that the crime rate did not diminish significantly after he became district head. Theft still dominated the criminal cases handled by police one year after Mamiq Ngoh had been elected (BPS Lombok Tengah 2006, 274). The high rate of motorcycle theft lasted until the end of Mamiq Ngoh's term in office in 2010. The police managed to solve only 33 cases of motorcycle theft out of the total of 279 cases in the entire Central Lombok region (BPS Lombok Tengah 2010, 233).

### **The Changing Contours of the Security Landscape: The Existence of *Datu Maling***

Things have been different from the early 2000s, when people no longer completely trusted informal security organizations but rather shifted their hopes to individual figures who were considered to have more integrity. These individual figures, popularly known as *datu maling*, tend to avoid affiliation with any particular informal security organization. Therefore, they can be more independent and flexible in determining their political direction.

A *datu maling* is a senior thief who has stopped stealing. He is usually someone who was renowned for courage and strength when still active as a thief in his youth. With the protection and security they provide, *datu maling* are influential as local strongmen in the neighborhood, both in everyday social life and in politics. *Datu maling* also protect the population in inter-village conflicts, often leading villagers who want to attack another village. Therefore, they are respected not only by the local people but also by younger thieves.

The strong influence of *datu maling* in Central Lombok relates to Lombok's historical precedent of defining thieves as respected and feared persons. This situation may have resulted from the Balinese occupation of Lombok in the precolonial period. Lombok people could not resist the Balinese in the eighteenth century, and Balinese aristocrats consolidated their power over large areas of Lombok (Van der Kraan 2009, 5). In these circumstances the theft of Balinese property emerged as a form of resistance, with

thieves targeting the property of Balinese nobles. During the Balinese occupation the people of Lombok did not consider stealing a criminal act. Thieves were regarded as taking back their property (reclaiming rights) that had been forcibly taken from them by Balinese aristocrats.

This historical precedent from the time of the Balinese occupation has influenced present-day local perspectives toward stealing. As some of the informants pointed out, the Balinese occupation enabled the development of local values—particularly among Sasak men—which place a premium on efforts to seize something rather than asking for it. Stealing or theft became a sort of initiation process into adulthood for some people. Stealing is highly appreciated since it requires courage, strength, and self-defence capabilities. Within this context, men with practical skills to steal things are thus perceived to be capable of looking after a family. While this argument might not represent the whole picture of local perspectives on stealing, it is not rare to find such a point of view among Sasak men. Hence, regardless of historical and sociological accuracy, it provides some of them with cultural justification for stealing.

The work of *datu maling* is similar to that of informal security groups when it comes to providing security services to residents. According to my local informants, people who want to secure their livestock (such as cows) make a mutual agreement with *datu maling*. These agreements include profit sharing. This sharing between the client and the *datu maling* is varied in form and usually agreed on through a process of negotiation. Usually the *datu maling* receives a share of the fees from the sale of livestock. The client also provides the *datu maling* with household goods such as cigarettes and sugar each week, in addition to an extra bonus once a year on Eid Al-Fitr.<sup>14)</sup> If a motorcycle is stolen, the client asks the *datu maling* to track it. The types of people who use a *datu maling* for security services are not just local farmers and ordinary villagers; many of them come from the highly educated middle class. An informant who works as a lecturer at the local university shared that he had asked a *datu maling* for help securing his cattle in the village.<sup>15)</sup>

With their position as protectors and providers of security, *datu maling* have become highly respected and feared figures. Therefore, these individuals have symbolic capital that allows them to earn money and prosperity even though they have retired from stealing. In some villages in the southern regions of Central Lombok, several *datu maling* have noticeably large houses compared to their neighbors. Their houses are mostly located in prime locations, such as on a hilltop. This reflects the respect that *datu maling* receive from local society.

14) Interview with Alfian, lecturer at Universitas Mataram, July 1, 2015.

15) Interview with Alfian, lecturer at Universitas Mataram, July 1, 2015.

Their symbolic capital brings *datu maling* financial benefits not only from ordinary people but also from the political elite. With their respected social status, individual *datu maling* become reference points for local people when choosing their political orientation. In the current Indonesian electoral system, candidates who run for election take advantage of notable figures such as *datu maling* to mobilize votes. A *datu maling* will ask residents in the neighborhood, and the people whom he protects, to vote for a particular candidate. This arrangement is similar to those of informal security groups in the past. People worry that if they refuse the directions of a *datu maling* their safety will be threatened. *Datu maling* can be described as “vote brokers” who are ready to mobilize votes on demand. Candidates in direct local or legislative elections lobby for *datu maling* to join their campaign team, and they compete to get the largest number of *datu maling* on their team. Candidates who have many *datu maling* on their team are more confident of winning.

However, *datu maling* are quite different from informal security groups when it comes to loyalty to particular political figures. A *datu maling* is not tied to a single patron or political figure, as was the situation with informal security groups, especially the Buru Jejak Kumpul group. *Datu maling*’s political calculations are based on pragmatism and profit. Informal security groups operated under an organizational banner, so they were relatively dependent and inflexible in their political maneuvers. In contrast, *datu maling* operate alone, without any specific organizational label, and without hundreds of members to be accommodated. Thus, a *datu maling* experiences more freedom and independence in determining his political preferences.

The independent political orientation and pragmatism of *datu maling* can be illustrated by the case of Mamiq Rahman (pseudonym). In the 2005 Central Lombok election he supported Mamiq Ngoh, who was elected as district head. However, in the 2010 election Mamiq Rahman shifted his support to Suhaili even though he came from southern Central Lombok, a region considered to be a support base for Mamiq Ngoh. As Mamiq Rahman revealed to me, Suhaili himself came to Rembitan village to ask for his support, inviting him to join his campaign team.<sup>16)</sup> Suhaili provided financial assistance and campaign equipment to Mamiq Rahman for use in the village. Suhaili’s personal visit to Mamiq Rahman’s house was effective in changing his political orientation. Suhaili was more serious about approaching Mamiq Rahman than Mamiq Ngoh, whom Mamiq Rahman had supported in the 2005 election. Mamiq Rahman ended up asking villagers to follow his decision to vote for Suhaili rather than Mamiq Ngoh. He told the people he could not ensure Rembitan’s security if they did not vote for Suhaili. Since the region

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16) Interview with Mamiq Rahman (pseudonym), a *datu maling*, July 31, 2015.



where Rembitan village is located is prone to criminality, many local people there worry about security. In the end Suhaili won in the village, and Mamiq Rahman received a payment and was invited to a celebration at Suhaili's house.<sup>17)</sup>

*Datu maling* provide support to politicians or candidates who offer the most attractive deal. Based on information from my local sources, the pay-off varies from money and recognition to protection and legal assistance.<sup>18)</sup> Therefore, money is not the only objective sought by *datu maling*. A local politician told me that the deal he made with the *datu maling* who supported him in the election for local parliament members in 2014 was not based on financial assistance. Rather, it was based on protection.<sup>19)</sup> By his admission, he did not give money to any of the *datu maling*. Instead, some of the *datu maling* contributed to financing his nomination process.<sup>20)</sup> Those *datu maling* hoped that if a politician was elected they would obtain assistance for any legal problems. Almost all *datu maling* have low education levels, so they feel they need help from politicians in any legal process. They also want to receive recognition from society. Politicians are expected to help *datu maling* gain recognition, for instance, by arranging public events that involve them.

### Preliminary Conceptualization of Fear Entrepreneur

The Central Lombok case is an example of how some people use fear of crime as a strategy to gain an electoral advantage. These people seek both financial benefits and political privileges. In Central Lombok, security, which should be a public good provided by the state, has been "privatized" by certain individuals and groups. Individuals and informal security groups sell security to those who are willing to become customers. These security sellers do not hesitate to use violence in their work. In this way, private individuals have largely replaced the state as a legitimate entity by monopolizing violence. Violent civil groups seem to enjoy legitimacy to perform acts of violence against criminals in the name of public security.

Individual figures or groups that provide security services are not unique to Lombok. They can be found in many places in Indonesia, such as Jawara in Banten and Forum

17) Interview with Mamiq Rahman (pseudonym), a *datu maling*, July 31, 2015.

18) Interview with a member of the legislative council from southern Central Lombok, confidential name, July 12, 2015.

19) Interview with a member of the legislative council from southern Central Lombok, confidential name, July 12, 2015.

20) Interview with a member of the legislative council from southern Central Lombok, confidential name, July 12, 2015.



Betawi Rempug in Jakarta. Political changes that occurred after the fall of Suharto resulted in the state losing significant control as the center of power over violence and coercion. Social groups took on the state's role when it came to controlling violence, positioning themselves on the blurred line between legal and illegal activity (Bakker 2015).

Mainstream explanations for the emergence of these so-called vigilante groups suggest they are a consequence of the political transition after the New Order ended and democratization policies—such as decentralization and local direct elections—were implemented (Hadiz 2010, 133; Wilson 2015, 2). The most prominent explanations present them as predatory vigilante groups seeking economic resources, especially in the informal economy. Whereas criminal gangs in Suharto's era were generally perceived as unconnected to religious groups, in the Reformasi era observers became conscious of criminal gangs with an overtly Muslim orientation and notions of morality. They adapted to the new political system to maximize the profits from predatory economic objectives and express their political ideology (Wilson 2008).

However, previous explanations are not adequate to portray specific practices that occurred in the Central Lombok case. Hence, I prefer the term “fear entrepreneur.” Like business entrepreneurs, fear entrepreneurs aim to collect as much profit as possible. Individual figures such as *datu maling* and informal security groups use people's fear for the sake of accumulating benefits, which include money and other privileges. Within this system, they can achieve prosperity and access to political elites. Through established relations with politicians, they can access resources from governmental authorities.

## Conclusion

Fear is not only a consequence of the body's biological or metabolic workings but is also socially constructed. Fear of crime can spread collectively. Fear became contagious and spread in Lombok through the “talk of crime” that took place, especially in the *berugak*. These *berugak* were scattered in many places. Local people discussed stories, rumors, and even gossip about theft and criminality. Even if they had not experienced criminal action directly, people involved in such talk became afraid. Through the talk of crime, the discourse about crime and theft (including considerations of what constituted crime and how it should be responded to) were discussed freely. *Berugak* were a primary node that enabled fear to spread widely, so that it became a collective phenomenon.

In 2005 informal security groups seemed to be the dominant force in Central Lombok electoral politics. They were both a source of fear and an assurance to the public of

protection against greater fear. They have not disappeared, but they have fragmented and no longer form a coherent political bloc. They were undone by the contradiction between their criminal role and their role as protectors against criminality. *Datu maling* have taken their place, but the same contradiction applies to these newly important figures. It is expected that they too will become less significant in the future.

In conclusion, politicians must fulfill the demands for civil groups in the context of decentralization and direct local elections. Ultimately, people at the grassroots level are the most disadvantaged. By relying on private individuals and organizations for public requirements like security, they are vulnerable to abuses of power. The state should be able to provide decent security services and monopolize the use of legitimate violence, in line with the principles of democracy and human rights.

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